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ABSTRACT

The adoption of proficiency-based principles in second language teaching does not mean using a new method of instruction, but rather providing maximum opportunities for students to perform communicative linguistic tasks in a variety of contexts and with a given degree of accuracy. This definition has implications for the learning and teaching processes. Students need to internalize vocabulary in order to understand and access it effectively, and need to develop personalized vocabulary in order to talk about their own worlds. Grammar can be more effectively taught as a means of communication if it is integrated with functions and contexts. Students will gain better control over structures and retain them longer if they practice with small chunks of grammar. An effective way to select grammar is to examine the frequency of structures in authentic discourse. Opportunities for developing thinking skills and communication can be maximized by using pair and group work techniques. In beginning language instruction, students internalize grammar and vocabulary more quickly and easily if exposed to oral input prior to seeing written language. From the beginning, students should be taught strategies for listening, and should have exposure to authentic listening and reading materials. Sample French vocabulary and Spanish grammar lessons incorporating these principles are presented. (MSE)

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TEACHING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY FOR PROFICIENCY

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The word "proficiency" has indeed become the buzzword of the 1980's in the profession. Journals feature article after article about theories dealing with acquisition of proficiency, while conferences offer various kinds of workshops dealing with strategies for teaching toward proficiency outcomes. While the concept of proficiency is no longer a novel one for most language educators, the profession is still searching for clearer implications to bridge the idea behind proficiency-based instruction with actual classroom techniques for teaching grammar and vocabulary.

Adoption of proficiency-based principles in one's teaching does not mean utilizing a new method of instruction. In simple terms, it means providing maximum opportunities for students to perform communicative linguistic tasks in a variety of contexts and with a given degree of accuracy, depending on the linguistic level of the class (Omaggio, 1986). Many implications for the learning/teaching processes are to be gleaned from this definition of proficiency.

(1) Students need to internalize vocabulary in order to understand and access it effectively. The word "internalize" here means the ability to associate directly an object or abstraction with the target language equivalent without the need to utilize the native language. We as teachers have for ages been frustrated with students, who seem to "know" the vocabulary for the test or immediate task and then promptly forget it by the next lesson. We find ourselves spending endless amounts of time teaching and reteaching the same vocabulary, but failing to see better results. A very successful technique for enabling students to internalize large amounts of vocabulary quickly and to retain it is the Total Physical Response strategy or an adaptation thereof. Through this technique, students develop listening comprehension skills by interacting with the environment in a physical manner, thus linking language and context (Asher, 1972). This interaction can range from responding to commands to passing around objects to arranging pictures in order, making them correspond to a story being told. The validity of TPR is supported by a wealth of experimentation, which also has indicated that it

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can be used as a basis for teaching all four skills (Palmer and Palmer, 1970; Asher and Price, 1967; Asher, Kusado, and de la Torre, 1974; Glisan, 1986).

(2) Students need to develop personalized vocabulary in order to talk about their own worlds. Since it would be impossible for any text to present all vocabulary which every student needs to describe his or her own world, we as teachers should be willing to fill in the gaps. Students may need other words for sports--white water rafting, body building, fencing--or even for family kinship terms--stepmother, adopted sister, half brother--which may not be included in the vocabulary presentation. Sometimes we find it time consuming to give extra words to students during a class period. One strategy which saves time is to have students hand in a list of words which they need in order to fulfill a given linguistic task, be it describing family or talking about leisure-time activities. This activity works well if done the day before the vocabulary unit is presented so that the teacher can include any extra words in the presentation. The entire class does not need to be held accountable for any "extra words" since they pertain to the needs and interests of individual students. The students requesting the supplemental vocabulary will remember the words well because they are important to them in their individual contexts.

(3) Grammar can be more effectively taught as a means for communication if it is integrated with functions and contexts. Knowledge of grammatical rules in and of themselves does not enable the student to use them productively for communication unless grammar and real communication have been bridged. Grammar points, therefore, need to be tied to the linguistic functions, or tasks, which we perform and to the various contexts in which the tasks are carried out. For example, present tense should be practiced so that students will be able to describe themselves, their families, interests, school- or work-related issues, as well as to ask questions. These functions, among many others, may occur in contexts such as school, work, shopping, public transportation, to name only a few. The proof of whether or not students have mastered a grammatical structure should be in their ability to use it for a communicative purpose, and not exclusively for doing mechnical drills or paper-and-pencil analyses. Further, utilizing grammar in this way serves as a motivational tool for students, who feel a sense of accomplishment by being able to communicate with others.

(4) Students will gain better control over structures and will retain them longer if they practice with small chunks

of grammar. We have for decades felt the need to attempt to teach "all" of the grammar of the target language with every rule and exception and exception to the exception. First-year textbooks have traditionally presented the entire grammar in very large chunks, such as one lesson on the "preterite and imperfect" or the "present subjunctive". The fact that students seldom internalized these structures is evident by the reality that we had to reteach these same structures in the third semester or year. Indeed many instructors have for this reason come to dread the third level! If we truly want students to develop proficiency, then we must provide maximum time for them to practice using the grammar in communicative contexts. We cannot expect students to internalize the subjunctive mood and be able to utilize it if they have twenty-seven rules thrown at them at once. Meaningful learning means building upon the presently existing schemata, or memory structures, and adding new material step by step. Students will understand and be able to use new structures if they are presented in smaller "chunks," thus providing less of a need for extensive grammatical analysis and more time for communicative practice. The structure, "subjunctive mood," for example, can be presented in chunks such as giving advice and suggestions, expressing doubt, expressing emotion, expressing wanting and wishing, among others. Another way to present small chunks of grammar is to present only two or three persons of each verb tense at a time so that students have ample time to practice with each. Memorizing verb forms in traditional paradigms usually means that students have to repeat all five forms before they can access the third person plural form! Another strategy for minimizing the grammar scope is to present certain structures as lexical items which are learned as vocabulary. This is especially useful for expressions of high frequency, such as in Spanish: me gusta (I like); quisiera/me gustaría (I would like). While these structures are quite complex linguistically, they need to be presented early on since they are so common in many different functions and contexts. Students learn them initially as lexical items and later on analyze their structures.

(5) An effective way to select grammar for presentation in the classroom is to examine the frequency of structures in authentic discourse. We like to think that the structures which we present and teach are those which native speakers utilize in their communication. However, many of the traditionally taught grammar points are of very low frequency in speech and, sometimes, of higher frequency in reading. For example, accordingly to Moreno de Alba, the future tense has a 0.8% frequency of occurrence in spoken Spanish (1978, p. 101); William Bull has found it to be over

three times more frequent in written sources (1947, pp. 451-66). Another finding in Spanish is that two-thirds of the uses of the familiar imperative are actually attention-getting clichés, such as mira (look), oye (listen), and fíjate (notice) (de Alba, 1978, p. 116). In addition, the research presently being done by the author of this paper has shown that a structure such as the use of double object pronouns is far more frequent in reading that it is in speaking. The results of these types of research should give us the basis for excluding those structures of very low frequency and for teaching certain structures for recognition in reading, where their use may be more frequent. This step will in turn give us more time for practice of the important grammatical structures and vocabulary.

(6) Students need maximum opportunities to utilize grammar and vocabulary in communicative tasks and situations. Narrowing the scope of grammar and presenting grammar in smaller chunks will enable us to have more time for communicative work. Communicative practice means providing opportunities for students to share their own ideas and information about their own worlds with each other. Such practice helps students to "acquire" language, i.e., internalize it subconsciously by using critical thinking skills and being motivated to learn. While the ideal way to acquire language is to live in the target language culture, communicative practice is one way to create an acquisition-rich environment in the classroom. This means that the teacher often has to step aside and encourage students to talk and to ask questions. It also means that the teacher should, during communicative activities, avoid interrupting to correct grammar errors, so as not to stop the student's train of thought and to avoid causing frustration. During more structured, precommunicative practice, error correction is often more overt since the focus is on learning a new structure. However, during communicative activities, where the focus is on encouraging students to communicate, the teacher can effectively handle error correction by noting problems during the activity, discussing them afterward, and if necessary, returning to more structured practice in order to overcome difficulties.

(7) Opportunities for developing thinking skills and communication can be maximized by utilizing pair and group work techniques. Because we are often faced with classes of twenty-five to thirty students, it is difficult to provide sufficient practice for each and every student. We can, however, maximum the time spent in communication by conducting pair and group activities. These techniques enable students to perform tasks such as interviewing each

other, debating, taking surveys/polls, solving problems, enacting role plays/situations, creating stories/dialogs, and playing games. Since using a language means interacting with others, we want to enable students to communicate with their classmates, and not just with the teacher. In order for these activities to be successful and conducted with the least amount of chaos, the following guidelines should be kept in mind: (a) The task should be clear and simple; (b) Students must know the grammar and vocabulary necessary for carrying out the task; (c) Students should be grouped or paired so that stronger students can help the weaker students; (d) A limited amount of time should be given for the activity so that students do not get bored; (e) The teacher should check on each group's work during the activity in order to answer questions and check on progress; and (f) Students must be made responsible for the activity by being asked to report to the entire class afterward or doing a writing assignment on the activity for homework; for example, writing a paragraph describing the results of the interview. Students will enjoy the variety of class activities as well as the opportunity to share their thoughts with their classmates.

(8) In beginning language instruction, students internalize grammar and vocabulary more quickly and easily if exposed to oral input prior to seeing written language. If students are told to close their books and to listen to the teacher, they pay closer attention to the oral input since they are unable to rely upon the written word. This encourages them to use inductive reasoning and to try to recognize the pattern of the grammatical structures being presented. The more students are actively involved in inductively understanding structures and meaning, the more effectively they will understand and retain information. Furthermore, students will develop better pronunciation skills if they imitate the teacher's model and do not have interference from trying to attach sound to the written letters before having heard the correct pronunciation. Without the crutch of the textbook, students must pay closer attention, are more challenged to do activities, and receive immediate feedback of their level of mastery of a given structure.

(9) From the beginning of language instruction, students should be taught strategies for listening and reading. We hope that after students leave our classes they are motivated to pick up a newspaper in the target language or listen to a radio broadcast. However, in order for students to feel competent to do this, they need to develop strategies for understanding oral and written input. In the classroom, we can first familiarize students with the strategies which they use in English in comprehending, and

second, teach them how to use similar strategies in comprehending the target language. Examples of listening and reading comprehension strategies which can be practiced include listening/reading for main ideas or for specific information, identifying main vocabulary words as clues for meaning, guessing meaning by using context, and utilizing background knowledge to anticipate meaning.

(10) Students need exposure to authentic listening and reading materials in order to understand how language is utilized in real contexts. If students are to learn to use real language, they need to listen to authentic materials such as news broadcasts, announcements, and talk shows, and to read authentic texts such as newspaper and magazine articles and literature. As discussed above, students need strategies for coping with the unknown language which they may encounter; further, they need to be discouraged from translating word for word in a blind effort to understand everything in a text. Authentic materials can be presented as early as level one provided that the teacher structures the reading or listening task at the level of the students' abilities; examples of such tasks are skimming/listening for the main idea, scanning/listening for specific details, or identifying words as clues to meaning. Students' ability to handle authentic materials can be greatly improved by including a pre-listening or pre-reading activity through which students activate their existing background knowledge to prepare them for the content of the text (Phillips, 1984). The same written or oral text presented early on in level one can be presented again at a later point or at a higher level so that students can perform higher level tasks with it.

In summary, the following are the important elements of teaching grammar and vocabulary for proficiency-based outcomes:

1. Internalization of vocabulary
2. Personalization of vocabulary
3. Listening before speaking
4. Practice of grammar orally before reading/analyzing structures
5. Limited scope of grammar
6. Active use = C3
   Closed books
   Communication
   Creativity
7. Practice of all four skills
8. Authentic listening and reading materials--development of strategies

The following is a sample vocabulary lesson in French which incorporates the principles previously discussed:

PERSONALIZING VOCABULARY - NOVICE LEVEL
Vocabulary Unit: Sports

I. **Internalization Stage:** Teacher presents vocabulary using pictures and teacher talk in French:

nager
danser
patiner
faire du ski
faire du football
faire de la culture physique
faire du camping
faire du cyclisme
faire du hockey (sur glace)
faire du ski nautique
faire du jogging
faire du tennis
faire du basketball

Students internalize new vocabulary by means of a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity in which they act out the sports mentioned and identify pictures. They also match sports to pictures of sport-related items such as a tennis racket, ice skates, swimming pool, bicycle, etc.

II. **Listening Stage:** Students listen to a brief sports announcement or conversation and identify the sports mentioned.

III. **Communication Stage:** Students use the new vocabulary to communicate with each other:

Which sports would you play in each season?
--En hiver,....
--En automne,....
--En printemps,....
--En été,....

In each of the following circumstances, which sport(s) would you play?
--Vous cherchez a faire du sport en équipe.
--Vous avez peu d'argent.
--Il pleut.
--Vous aimez sortir le dimanche.

--Vous désirez passer du temps sur l'eau.
--Il fait beau.

IV. **Personalization Stage:** Teacher first gives any additional vocabulary to students who are interested in other sports which were not presented. Then students discuss their own preferences:

With what frequency do you practice the sports listed above?
souvent quelquefois rarement pas du tout

Which are your favorite sports?
Which sport would you most like to learn?
Which sport do you most prefer to do alone?
Which sport do you most prefer to do with others?

Students interview other:

INTERVIEW SHEET

Interviewer_____ Interviewee_____

	Souvent	Quelquefois	Rarement	Pas du tout
1. Nager				
2. Danser				
3. Patiner				
4. Faire du ski				
5. Faire du tennis				
6. Faire du hockey (sur glace)				
7. Faire du cyclisme -etc.-				

\+ = favorite sport
* = would like to learn
\- = afraid to learn

VI. **Reading:** Students read an authentic reading from the sports pages in order to identify the familiar sports and/or use the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar sports.

VII. **Writing:** Students write up the results of the oral interviews which they did in class (Part IV. above).

***Recycling:**

With practice of past/future time

To review numbers (scores, statistics)

With discussion of health-related matters

To point out cultural differences

With expression of opinion, doubt, hypothesis (professional sports players and their salaries, college sports and academics, sports players and use of drugs/steroids, the Olympic games, the competitiveness of sports for children, etc.)

To elicit discussions/debates/role plays dealing with the themes above

SOURCE: Journal Francais d'Amérique, Vol. 10, No. 19, 23 Septembre - 6 Octobre 1988, p. 13.

Les Français pratiquent de plus en plus le sport

Les athlètes français ne rapporteront peut-être pas beaucoup de médailles lors des Jeux Olympiques de Séoul mais les 55 millions de Français pratiquent de plus en plus, une activité sportive.

Un Français sur cinq pratique actuellement un sport dans le cadre d'une association sportive ou fédération. Mais c'est surtout la pratique du sport au niveau individuel qui a progressé — près d'une semaine en durée annuelle moyenne contre seulement 20 minutes en 1975.

Cet engouement pour le sport a entraîné le développement d'une industrie qui réalise un chiffre d'affaires annuel d'environ 10 milliards de francs, soit 1 % de l'ensemble des industries françaises.

Le 37e SISEL (Salon international du sport et des équipements de loisirs), qui s'est tenu du 4 au 7 septembre à Paris-Le Bourget, a permis de constater ce développement de la pratique sportive dans une nation pourtant réputée rétive à l'effort physique.

C'est principalement grâce aux femmes que la pratique sportive se répand : la progression a été de l'ordre de 44 % entre 1978 et 1986 chez les femmes contre seulement 28 % chez les hommes.

Mais les hommes demeurent plus sportifs que les femmes : 22,7 % d'hommes adhèrent à une association sportive contre 13,2 % de femmes et 60,8 % d'hommes (pour 39,4 % de femmes) pratiquent au moins une activité sportive.

Vive la gymnastique et le football

Durant les vacances, autant d'hommes que de femmes font du ski alpin ou du vélo. En revanche, les femmes nagent et marchent plus que les hommes. Les hommes sont plus nombreux à jouer au tennis durant les vacances : 20,12 % d'entre eux pour 12,87 % des femmes.

Le reste de l'année, les hommes et les femmes font de la marche, mais moins que durant les vacances. L'activité la plus pratiquée par les femmes durant l'année est la gymnastique et 12 % des Françaises s'adonnent à cette discipline. Elles sont 10 fois plus nombreuses que les hommes à choisir cette activité.

Quant aux hommes, ils choisissent de préférence une activité spécifiquement masculine : le football. Près de 12 % des Français jouent au football.

The following is a sample grammar lesson in Spanish which incorporates the principles previously discussed:

TEACHING GRAMMAR FOR PROFICIENCY

Grammar Point: Subjunctive Mood
Lesson Focus: Subjunctive with querer, aconsejar recomendar, es necesario + que
Function (Meaning): Giving Advice and Suggestions

A. Grammatical Presentation:

Teacher gives students a list of 8 suggestions for good study habits. Students have a series of drawings which they match to the sentences in order to practice understanding content:

1. Recomiendo que Uds. hablen en español.
2. Recomiendo que Uds. escuchen las cintas.
3. Recomiendo que Uds. practiquen el vocabulario.
4. Recomiendo que Uds. lean los libros.
5. Recomiendo que Uds. escriban los ejercicios.
6. Recomiendo que Uds. duerman ocho horas cada noche.
7. Recomiendo que Uds. vayan al laboratorio de lenguas.
8. Recomiendo que Uds. se acuesten temprano.

Students and teacher generate a list of the 8 activities in present indicative and put them on the board (hablan, escuchan, etc.). Teacher reads the 8 recommendations again and elicits from students the difference in verb forms between the present indicative and the new form used with advice and suggestions. Students should recognize that they are hearing the "opposite" ending. Teacher asks students what the sign "n" at the end of the verb always indicates; they know from practice with the present that it signals third person plural. Teacher points out that students need to produce the first person singular present indicative before changing the ending. Only the third person singular and plural forms are presented in this lesson.

B. Listening:

Students listen to taped conversations in which people are giving each other advice (parent to child, teacher to student, doctor to patient). They identify each piece of advice being given.

C. Speaking Practice with Focus on Form:

Teacher tells students that they are going to practice giving recommendations to the teacher (Recomiendo que Ud...). First -ar verbs are practiced, followed by -er/-ir verbs. Recomiendo que Ud..... (mirar la televisión, escuchar música, tomar el sol, descansar, jugar al tenis, dar buenas notas, comer tacos, ir de vacaciones, etc.). Students practice producing the forms without seeing the written verbs in order to focus on how they sound. Teacher helps with verb formation as needed. After the exercise, students copy verb forms into their notebooks for reinforcement; teacher adds two irregular verbs, sea and haga.

D. Written Exercises:

Students complete several exercises in text in which they practice using querer, aconsejar, and es necesario with advice. The exercises include matching and completion.

E. Creative Use/Personalization:

Students take turns giving each other advice or recommendations for things they would like their classmates to do or not to do. They can also do the same activity using parents or teacher as the persons being given advice.

F. Reading:

Students read a short dialog or story and identify the types of advice being given.

G. Homework Assignment: Writing: "Suggestion Box"

As one part of a homework assignment, students write a list of 5 suggestions or recommendations for the school principal or university president to be put into an imaginary suggestion box.

Follow-up Work:
Practice talking about advice which other people give (changing the subject in first clause to persons other than I: ex., My parents want me to....). Additional listening and reading of authentic materials to identify suggestions and discuss them. Writing school advice column.

Recycling at Higher Levels:
With practice in giving advice for health-related matters (smoking, drinking, exercise, eating properly, sleeping, etc.)

To practice giving "hypothetical" advice (to the President, candidates, university officials, etc.)

To practice expressing advice and recommendations in the past (with past subjunctive)

To express opinions and debate (current events, moral issues)

SOURCE: Buenhogar, Año 21, No. 9, 23 abril 1986.

Dra. Joyce Brothers

Cualquiera de estos casos puede ser el suyo. Infórmese leyendo esta sección y las soluciones que ofrece esta famosa sicóloga

MADRE DEMASIADO ABARCADORA

"Llevo varios años de casada y tengo 2 niños. Por razones económicas, mi madre ha venido a vivir con nosotros luego de enviudar. Ni a mi marido ni a mí nos molestó en un principio. Al contrario, nos sentíamos felices de poderle dar calor y, a la vez, de tener alguien en casa que mucho representara para nuestros niños. Sin embargo, según han pasado los meses, la situación ha cambiado. Por ser muy dominante, mi madre me sigue viendo como "su niña" y pretende dirigir mi vida como cuando realmente era niña. Quiero poner final a esta situación cuanto antes, pero no sé qué hacer."

Ya usted ha dado el primer paso en la solución del problema que tiene: darse cuenta de que tiene que ponerle final. ¿Cómo exactamente? Valiéndose de una firmeza absoluta cada vez que su madre desee imponer su voluntad sobre la suya, para así demostrarle que usted es toda una persona adulta. No quiero con ello decir que deba usted asumir una actitud agresiva. Sencillamente firme. Hable abiertamente con ella sobre el tema y, si aun así persistiera en su comportamiento dominante, no dude en buscar ayuda profesional, ya sea un sacerdote o sicólogo. Si nada de ello pareciera funcionar, tendrá que estudiar muy bien la economía familiar, para que ella viva sola.

UNA VECINA IMPERTINENTE

"Tengo 50 años. Soy divorciada y algunas veces salgo acompañada de buenos amigos con quienes generalmente regreso a casa tarde en la noche. Cada vez que esto ocurre, mi vecina, una señora algo mayor que yo, está siempre levantada, mirando por detrás de la cortina de la ventana. Me molesta mucho esta impertinencia. ¿Qué debo hacer?"

Desde luego, tiene usted una vecina muy entrometida. Y si bien le molesta que ella la vigile por detrás de la cortina, probablemente disfrute muy normalmente cada vez que se rompe la cesión. Al notar una actitud tan natural de parte suya, quizá deje de supervisar su vida y se dedique más a la de ella.

¿TIENE MI MARIDO OTRA . . . ?

"Aunque tengo un medio cariñoso y de mucha confianza, últimamente he comenzado a dudar de su fidelidad. No sólo la mala alguien, sino que muchas son las ocasiones en que me pone excusas de trabajo para llegar a horas inconvencionales. ¿Cree usted que él tenga otra?"

Si las excusas de trabajo son verdaderas, su marido tiene una recarga de trabajo. Y, por lo tanto, se siente lleno de presiones, que le impiden ser el mismo hombre cariñoso que generalmente es. En ese caso, trataría de comprobar muy delicadamente (llamándolo a la oficina en esas horas que antes no acostumbraba trabajar, por ejemplo) si sus excusas profesionales son válidas. De serlo, como estoy casi segura que lo es, no tendría que preocuparse por "otra".

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